

Libby Community Advisory Group

Meeting Summary

May 16, 2002

Introductions

Gerald Mueller and members of the Libby Community Advisory Group (CAG) introduced themselves. A list of the members and guests in attendance is attached below as Appendix 1.

Agenda

Mr. Mueller reviewed an agenda for this meeting, including the following topics:

- EPA Report
- ATSDR Report
- State Report
- TAG Update
- Public Comment

EPA Report

Wendy Thomi reported on the following topics behalf of EPA.

Sampling of Homes and Businesses

EPA contractors, identified by badges, are presently visiting Libby homes and businesses in the area defined by Highway 2 and 2nd Avenue, and California, Mineral, and Montana Streets. This week seventy-six properties were visited. The contractors are either conducting brief interviews if the home or business occupants are present or are leaving an informational flyer and a yellow tag on doors if they are not. The home or business occupants are being asked where they might be reached and what is the best time for doing so, whether they want EPA to take soil samples on the property, and if the building contains vermiculite insulation. The information sheet contains basic information about the sampling and the yellow card contains a few short questions. Home and business owners not present for the interview can give permission for soil sampling by signing and re-hanging the yellow card. Sampling will occur about one week after permission is given. If the home or business occupants are not on the premises when the sampling occurs, a red tag will be left identifying where the sampling has occurred. Copies of the sampling plan are available at the EPA Information Center. Sampling will start next week.

Audience Member Question - Have the contractor visits in the downtown area you described been completed? The next door building did not receive a tag.

Answer by EPA Contractor Dave Schroeder - We will check into this. Please call the EPA Information Center if you live or have a business in the area and have not been interviewed or found a tag left on your door.

CAG Member Question - What happens if a resident with a garden containing visible vermiculite and neighbors with small children on either side refuses to allow sampling?

Answer - First, if a property is not sampled, EPA cannot provide a letter stating that it is clean. Second, I am not sure what action EPA might take if a property owner's refusal appears to put neighbors at risk. At a minimum, we will want to talk with the property owner.

CAG Member Question - In such as circumstance, could someone contact EPA anonymously? We do not want to set off conflict between neighbors.

Answer - We will talk with Jim Christiansen and report back.

CAG Member Question - If you do not have your home or business sampled and cleaned now,

will EPA come back later and provide another chance to do so?

Answer - The plan is to sample about 3,500 homes by November, 2002. We cannot complete cleanup of all of them this year. The cleanup will continue until all of the homes and business for which permission is given are cleaned. If a business or home owner does not give permission now, there may be another chance before the sampling and cleanup mobilization ends. Once this happens in three to four years, EPA probably will not come back to cleanup a property. There may be other procedures in place for future sampling and cleanup at that time.

Audience Member Question - How far up Farm to Market Road will sampling and cleanup occur?

Answer - The initial plan is to sample within an area of about two hundred square miles. Toward Kalispell, the cut off is now the top of Whiskey Hill. Jim Christiansen may enlarge or reduce the area.

Residential Cleanup

Beginning June 3, the EPA contractor will begin working with homeowners to determine what can and cannot be cleaned and on necessary relocations.

Residential Cleanup Contractor

The decision on the cleanup contractor has not yet been made.

Concession Stand

The concession stand will be open for the sale of food for baseball games, but the equipment room will be closed until after June 10. It will then be cleaned. A portable shed has been moved nearby for equipment storage.

Burlington Northern (BN) Railroad

BN is currently sweeping its tracks and will continue to do so through next Tuesday. EPA is monitoring the air quality around this activity.

Michael Crill Letter

Michael Crill recently wrote a letter to the local newspaper regarding possible asbestos exposure associated with the Girl Scouts sidewalk sweeping. After Memorial Day, EPA will conduct sampling to determine if asbestos exposure could occur by sweeping.

Millwork West Planer

Cleanup of the planer will begin on May 29.

High School and Middle School Tracks

The contract for restoration of the tracks will be awarded after Memorial Day. Work is scheduled to begin on June 7.

CAG Member Question - Is there a web site we can go to for information about contract bids and awards?

Answer - Yes, www.volpe.dot.gov.

ATSDR Report

Dan Strausbaugh reported on behalf of ATSDR on two topics.

Medical Screening and CT-Scan Test Report

The final report on the two rounds of medical screening and the CT-scan testing should be completed this summer. We have not seen any indications that the trends about disease incidence previously reported to the CAG will be changed. The results in the final report will be supported with greater statistical power.

University of Montana (UM) Asbestos Conference

UM will convene a conference on asbestos June 24 and 25. Dr. Liz Putman, a researcher in Dr. Holian's group who previously appeared before the CAG, has suggested that people from Libby attend the session on Monday morning which addresses Libby. Dr. Falk from the US Department of Health and Human Services, Dr. Lybarger from ATSDR, Montana's State Medical Officer Dr. Spence, and Dr. Black will participate in this session. The registration fee for the Monday morning session is \$35 and for the entire conference is \$175. Brochures about the conference are available at the EPA Information Center.

State of Montana

Dr. Spence reported that the state has been expanding its mesothelioma data base. Beginning with 1978, the first year for Montana's tumor registry, the state has found over 100 recorded mesothelioma deaths in Montana. Dr. Spence will present this data at the July CAG meeting.

CAG Member Question - How do these 100 deaths compare percentage wise to the expected number for the US?

Answer - Preliminary analysis indicates that the 100 deaths is between 5 and 8 times the expected level of mesothelioma deaths.

CAG Member Question - How many of these cases are from Lincoln County?

Answer - The data are not now broken down by county. The data report where people died, not where they were exposed. We intend to look at employment history to begin to get at exposure history.

CAG Member Question - What about people who died out of state?

Answer - We know of eight former Montana residents that died out of state from mesothelioma. The fact that people move after exposure is one factor that tends to cause under reporting of mesothelioma deaths from Montana exposures. We are requesting death certificates from other states.

Technical Assistance Grant (TAG) Update

George Keck provided an update on the TAG using a handout. The TAG Steering Committee, the members of which are listed in Appendix 2, met for the first time this past Tuesday night and decided to pursue a grant.

CAG Member Question - Will the TAG report to the CAG?

Answer - The TAG will be independent of the CAG; however, two members of the TAG are also CAG members, so TAG updates will be provided here.

Public Comment

Audience Member Question - People are worried about losing W.R. Grace medical insurance. Have the eligibility criteria changed?

Answer by Alan Stringer - The criteria have not changed.

W.R. Grace Medical Plan Update

At Mr. Stringer's request, Dr. Flynn of Health Network of America (HNA) provided an update on the W.R. Grace medical plan. Since the plan was initiated in 2000, it has not been audited. Initially, W.R. Grace wanted easy enrollment in the plan, so it accepted applicants in the following three categories without verifying their medical condition: people were former W.R. Grace employees, employee spouses or dependents, or who lived within a 20 mile radius of the Libby mine or mill for at least 12 consecutive months prior to January 1, 2000. Medical records were not reviewed. W.R. Grace recently requested that HNA both audit the program and review applications to ensure that people are qualified according to the plan's medical eligibility criteria. HNA has retained Dr. Paul Wheeler of Johns Hopkins Medical School who is a certified B-Reader and Board Certified Radiologist to review x-rays and Dr. Elliott Fishman also from Johns Hopkins to review CT-scans. Dr.'s Black and Whitehouse have been asked to send x-rays and CT scans on 13 of the applicants so their applications can be reviewed again.

Sixteen new applicants have recently been notified that HNA was unable to substantiate the plan's required asbestos-related disease diagnosis so they are not eligible for inclusion in the plan. In nine of these cases, HNA consultants reviewed the applicants' chest x-rays and/or CT-scans, and did not find asbestos-related disease. These sixteen may be admitted to the plan if new information is provided showing compliance with the medical criteria.

Audience Member Question - Were any of these sixteen found to have asbestos-related disease in the ATSDR medical screening?

Answer - HNA did request B-reader reports from the CARD Clinic and received two.

Audience Member Question - Why hire another B-reader to repeat the analysis done by the B-readers in the ATSDR medical screening?

Answer - The plan says that x-rays must be read by a B-reader. Reviewing the medical records is part of HNA's responsibility.

CAG Member Question - Are you also accepting CT-scans as part of the medical verification?

Answer - Yes. We have Dr. Fishman review the CT-scans.

CAG Member Question - Do CT-scans trump chest x-rays?

Answer - Yes.

CAG Member Question - Who is paying Dr. Wheeler and Dr. Fishman?

Answer - Dr. Wheeler and Dr. Fishman are paid by HNA; HNA is paid by W.R. Grace.

CAG Member Question - Do the HNA consultant readers have experience with tremolite asbestos?

Answer - I don't know their experience with tremolite.

Audience Member Question - How many people are in the plan now, and how many has HNA

audited?

Answer - There are 750 people currently enrolled. We have audited about 200 of the current members.

Audience Member Question - Of those you have audited, how many have you found not to be medically eligible?

Answer – Fifteen to twenty may not be medically eligible because their chest CT scans have been read as not showing any pleural or parenchymal abnormalities (no pleural plaques or thickening).

CAG Member Comment - The problem is not with the auditing by HNA. The problem is with the plan's medical criteria. We are back to step one with the W.R. Grace medical plan.

CAG Member Comment - Disqualifying people who have been in the plan is not right. Some of these people stopped paying their previous health insurance, and now could not rejoin because their insurance company would view their disease as a pre-existing condition.

CAG Member Comment - I know of a woman who lived for twenty years near the screening plant, and now she has lung cancer but is apparently not eligible for the W.R. Grace plan.

Response - If this woman smoked and does not have indications of asbestos-related disease such as plural thickening or plural plaque, she would not be eligible. The statistics are that people exposed to asbestos have a five percent increased risk of lung cancer, people who smoke have a ten percent increased risk, and people who have both smoked and been exposed to asbestosis have a fifty percent increase cancer risk.

CAG Action - The CAG agreed to include the W.R. Grace medical plan on its next meeting agenda and to have Mr. Mueller request both Dr. Black and Dr. Flynn attend to discuss it.

CAG Member Comment - The CAG's last meeting was over a month ago. During that time several issues have arisen on which the CAG might have acted, including the W.R. Grace medical plan, the Superfund tax issue, the cancellation of a Senate hearing on the Libby asbestos situation, and regional hearings about asbestos in the work place by the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA). MSHA did hold a hearing in Spokane, and two of us drove to Spokane, but arrived too late to testify. Washington's Senator Murray has introduced a bill to ban asbestos. When the CAG meets only once a month, it will limit its ability to participate in issues such as these.

Response - When CAG members learn of issues such as these, perhaps they could send an email message to Gerald Mueller who could then send it to all CAG members so we could think about it prior to the CAG meeting.

Response by Gerald Mueller - I will ask the CAG at the next meeting to consider some means to call a second CAG meeting during the month.

Audience Member Question - I read recently about a deadline in the W.R. Grace bankruptcy proceeding for a year from now. Does anyone know what this date refers to?

Response by Alan Stringer - This deadline which was set by the Bankruptcy Court is probably in reference to property damage claims in a class action law suit.

Response by Wendy Thomi - EPA will look into this deadline and explain its significance in a

newspaper Q&A.

CAG Member Question - Is the county conducting ambient air sampling around town?

Answer - Kendra Lind with the Lincoln County Health Department is conducting air sampling.

CAG Member Question - Last year when BN engaged in similar track sweeping activities as Ms. Thomi reported tonight, high levels of asbestos were found in the air afterwards. Will we again find that BN is causing unacceptable levels of asbestos in the air after-the-fact?

Answer - EPA is monitoring BN's track sweeping activities. Samples were delivered to the lab in Libby today, and the results will be known tomorrow. BN is aware of the problem caused last year and is taking steps to prevent a reoccurrence this year.

Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, June 13, 2002 at 7:00 p.m. in the Ponderosa Room of Libby City Hall.

Appendix 1

CAG Member & Guest Attendance List

May 16, 2002

Members	Group/Organization Represented
K.W. Maki	Libby School District #4
George Keck	Community Health Center (CHC)
Gary Spencer	Business Community/Citizen
Bob Dedrick	Asbestos Victim
George Bauer	City of Libby
Kenneth Hays	Senior Citizens
Wendy Thomi	EPA Community Involvement
Dan Strausbaugh	ATSDR
LeRoy Thom	Former Grace Employee
Gayla Benefield	LCAVRO
Mike Switzer	Asbestos Victim
Clinton Maynard	Area Asbestos Research Group
Gary D. Swenson	Libby Volunteer Fire Department
Norita Skramstad	Asbestos Victim

Appendix 2

TAG Steering Committee

Bob Beagle 18 Rainbow Lane	Real Estate	293-6189 (home) 293-7721 (work)	munro@libby.org
Dr. Steven Christianson % Prompt Care 308 Louisiana Ave.	Health Care	293-8756 293-0100 (work)	
Darrell Dusek 785 Farm to Market Rd.	Homeowner	293-9667 (home)	
Michael Cohan 4 Pine Court	Local Business	293-2341 (home)	
Ann German 421 Montana Ave.	Attorney	(home)	
Barbara Guthneck 8577 Farm to Market Rd.	Grant Writer	293-3620 (home)	guthneck@hotmail.com
Jerry Hersman	Local Business	293-9130 (home) 293-8238 (work)	
Manon Hughes/Brett McCully % Kootenai Surveyors P.O. Box 393	Engineering	293-9886/295-4009 (home) 293-4354 (work)	afhughes@libby.org
George Keck 8561 Farm to Market Rd.	CAG	293-7446 (home)	keck@libby.org
Kendra Lind % Lincoln County Offices	Environmental Health	293-7781 X 220 (work)	klind@libby.org
Tim Moniz % Northwestern Const. Co. 210 Hammer Rd.	Local Construction	293-6757 (work)	
Gary Morton 421 Montana Ave.	Home Owner	293-5357 (home)	
Pat Naughton P.O. Box 621	Economic Development	293-8406 (work)	
Jon Reny % Flathead Community College 225 Commerce Way	Education	293-7339 (home) 293-2721 (work)	
Melody Schroder % Montana Peaks Employment 225 Commerce Way	Employment Services	293-2721 (work)	

Dan Stephens 1024 Louisiana Ave.	City Management	292-3973 (home) 293-4184 (work)	
Sandy Wagner P.O. Box 153	CAG	293-5010 (home) 293-6244 (work)	jnswagner@lclink.com